

Doctrinal and other errors have crept into the churches over the past two millennia. Some of them are worse than others. We now have a situation where theologians like John Piper commend and practise a 'prayer technique' known as '*Lectio Divina*'.

The problem with it is that Piper is a leading figure in the so-called 'New Calvinist' (NC) movement, and what he says will influence thousands of others. The NC itself is a peculiar and ungodly mix of frank charismaticism and a form of Calvinism that relies on some of the teaching of Jonathan Edwards. I can state unequivocally that the movement is not of God.

### **Roman Catholic Foundation**

Charismatics follow numerous erroneous teachings and practices, such as the Jesuit 'spiritual exercises'. *Lectio Divina* (Latin: 'divine reading') is no different, and any practice stemming from the cultic Romanist fold is automatically suspicious!

The awkward thing about this prayer technique (because that is what it is) is that practitioners believe scripture is the living word of God, and the technique is used to bring them into communion with God. Obviously, for untaught Christians, this is delightful, because, they think, it glorifies God. Once they think this way, error creeps in, as it has.

When it comes to doctrine and practice, we have to be critical and strict, and not simply accept something which has a supposed 'holy' tag pinned to it... which is exactly what happened when the evil Toronto Blessing burst the churches asunder with its Satanic brew.

As they do with so many aspects of their false religion, Romanists have developed very orchestrated forms of 'worship', requiring step-by-step adherence. With standard *Lectio Divina* (LD), there are four stages to prayer: *Reading, Meditating, Praying and Contemplation*.<sup>1</sup>

The usual form of LD starts with a reading of a passage or single verse of scripture; the reader then reflects on what he has read, then prays about his thoughts on it, before contemplating the whole exercise. One has to ask a very basic question – if this is a Roman practice, then **what** can the reader reflect on and **how**

? When he has marshalled his thoughts, are his prayers just Romanist in content and type? And if this is so, what can be the use of his contemplation?

Now, if the practitioner is Christian, and not Romanist... the same questions must be asked, for 'technique' is not a word I would use in relation to genuine prayer. If a man resorts to a technique, then all his ways will be mechanical and not led by the Holy Spirit. In many ways, LD is more old-Judaism than modern-Christian. It is also typically charismatic, so should be rejected out-of-hand.

### **Theological Impoverishment**

Throughout charismaticism theology is usually neglected (unless it is the thin, watery type found amongst many charismatics); during the Toronto Blessing period, which ignited the current forms of the movement, theology was despised and scorned, and 'knowledge' that led to so many errors was 'extra-biblical', meaning that it was not genuine!

Now, with charismatics superficially accepting Calvinism, we have a strange mixing of new wine in old skins. The result will be erosion of the skins and a bursting of the bottle. Only in the case of charismaticism, the wine is not wine but corrosive acid.

Add the fake Alpha course to this weird concoction and we are left with a charismaticism that is desperately trying to infuse itself with more baubles and strange doctrines of devils. LD is one such strange admixture. Calvinism cannot and does not meld with charismaticism! So, any attempt to join one to the other is bound to be an act of fakery.

LD does not look at prayer theologically, and does not analyse prayer. No doubt some will retort that we should not analyse prayer – but if we just 'pray' unthinkingly, we are easy prey for cultists and Satan. We must examine everything in our Christian lives and test the spirits. Prayer is no exception.

### **Christ in Every Text?**

Practitioners of LD, however, always look for Christ in every text they read. This is not how we should read scripture. We should simply read it as it is written! Let scripture itself tell us what it says... if we always put Christ into it, then we are likely to come up with error. Christ is certainly

behind all of scripture, but to say He is always the central meaning is absurd.

Practitioners think they have an increased knowledge of Christ by using LD, but I say they are deluded and only see what they wish to see. They come to texts with a predetermined conclusion and core 'meaning', instead of allowing scripture to speak for itself. Typically of charismaticism, it prefers emotion and mysticism to solid facts.

Ambrose took his method of studying scripture from Origen, and then taught them to Augustine, but the practice known as LD was first started by a monk, Benedict, in the 6th century. These first teachings were then made formal by Guigo II, a Carthusian monk and Prior of Grande Chartreuse monastery. He died about 1193. He was the first to think of prayer as a 'ladder' up which we can climb to reach a mystical union with God, in stages. Hence his famed book at the time, 'The Ladder of Monks'.

Without doubt this was early Arminian-style thought, for it makes works to be the essential centre of prayer. The final stage of prayer in LD leads one to 'the gift of quiet stillness in the presence of God' – which is why LD is also popular with some Quakers – Quakerism itself being heretical. This was especially so after pope Paul VI recommended LD to all people.<sup>2</sup>

LD implies strongly that only practitioners come to understand the meaning of scripture, and this was said by Origen to the then pope.<sup>3</sup> In other words it smacks of gnosticism, which itself smacks of an occult affinity. Origen was right to say that the Bible is actually God's living word, but he was wrong to suggest that because of this every man who reads it contemplatively will come to know Him.

It is to Origen that we can ascribe the most basic teaching in LD. He taught that ALL scriptural texts are secondary to Christ, and ALL refer to Christ as the 'Word of God'. He therefore thought that when we put Christ into every text, we unlock its true meaning. Sadly, this is not true interpretation, but a very strange and misleading way to read scripture. It is like assuming that all tins of paint are black, and telling everyone that they should look for black in tins, even if the contents are brightly coloured: the assumption does not equal the actuality.

### **Desert Fathers and Mothers**

We must see LD as part of the early (4th century) monastic lives of monks, many of whom lived

in the desert, believing this brought them closer to God. It is a way of life still indulged in by many men and women, though it is based on a false premise.

These early men, known as the 'Desert Fathers', thought that constant prayer in a monastic setting would lead them closer to God. This both misunderstands what prayer is, and perpetuates the unacceptable nature of monastic life, which does nothing to grow genuine spiritual fruit.

The Desert Fathers lived in an Egyptian desert and by the time the best known died in 356, thousands of men and women (Desert Mothers) were enjoying sand in their food! For odd reasons, they greatly influenced early Christianity, and then medieval Christianity (Romanism), which infiltrated religious 'renewals' such as the German Evangelicals, Pietists and Methodism. However, the Desert Fathers lacked the full four stages of LD, even though what they did influenced its formation.

*"Lectio Divina is an authentic source of Christian spirituality recommended by our Rule. We therefore practice it every day, so that we may develop a deep and genuine love for it, and so that we may grow in the unsurpassing knowledge of Christ." <sup>4</sup>*

The above modern quote is by the Romish Carmelite Order, so we can see the company being kept by adherents to Lectio Divina! Rome and the Carmelites have this to say about their 'Carmelite charism':

*"A charism is a gift from God to the Church for the world. With regard to a Religious Order, the term refers to the gift which God gives to an individual or group to inspire the founding of a new religious family within the Church. This gift is handed down through the centuries and enriched by all who are called to live it. The charism of each religious family is the particular way in which its members are called to follow Christ. Since all Christians follow Christ, the charisms will have many elements in common, but the way in which these elements are emphasised gives each religious group its unique feel. All religious families have been asked by the Church to rediscover their original founding charism and make it come alive in each culture and in every age.*

*This Rule of St. Albert and the experience of the Carmelites as they sought to be faithful to it in*

*various circumstances gave definitive shape to the charism. We can say that there are several elements which make up the Carmelite charism. Firstly, and most importantly, it is a way of following Christ with total dedication. Carmelites do this by seeking to form contemplative communities at the service of God's people in whose midst they live. Fraternity, service and contemplation are therefore essential values for all Carmelites."*

This is the company being kept by those who follow the LD rule of prayer! Including 'New Calvinists' (charismatics) such as John Piper, et al. The meaning they give to 'charism' is nothing like that of scripture! One error leads to another, and another. But, this is not the real point. For Carmelites, 'prayer' and 'contemplation' are a major part of their monastic life. Of course, both terms are interpreted wrongly, because this is what cults do. About prayer and contemplation, they say:

*"Prayer and contemplation for the Carmelite are not private matters between the individual and God but are to be shared with others since the charism is given for the whole world. Therefore there is an emphasis in the Order on the ministry of teaching prayer and giving spiritual direction. The Carmelite is aware that the transformation of the human heart by God may be hidden from most eyes but has far reaching consequences for our world. The way of prayer is mysterious and goes beyond our normal human categories. Prayer opens us to the Ultimate Mystery." <sup>5</sup>*

According to scripture, Jesus Himself tells us to pray in private! Personal prayers cannot be 'shared' with others – they can only know what we have prayed about. Is the way of prayer 'mysterious'? I do not think so: it is a straightforward talking with God! The last phrase ('ultimate mystery') is shrouded in mysticism! The Carmelites publish a day-by-day instruction for 'Lectio' readings that lead to the other three LD stages. In itself this defies the true prayers of God's saved, who pray as and when God determines. For an example of these daily 'Lectio' outlines, go to <http://ocarm.org/en/content/lectio/lectio-mark-121b-28>

Other Roman groups practice LD. Benedictine 'Father', Luke Dysinger of St Andrew's Abbey, says that LD is a *"very ancient art, practised at one time by all Christians (Ed. Catholics)... it is a slow, contemplative praying of the scriptures (enabling) the Bible, the word of God, to become means of union with God."*

<sup>6</sup>

Thus, it is technique and not true prayer. It is Arminian, because it teaches we can have 'union' with God, simply by following the steps of LD (works). It implies that if we follow the steps in detail, we will have this union, no matter whether we are saved or not.

He says that LD PLUS daily manual labour, PLUS the Liturgy, leads to an "*underlying spiritual rhythm*", which then leads to mystical union with God. This is what charismatic adherents of LD link to and become a part of... it is all of works, and heavily Romanised. The monk goes on to describe LD in more detail, but it is still essentially a Roman Catholic invention.

### Summary

Lectio Divina was invented by Roman Catholic mystics and continues to lead many Roman orders and others. It is popular with Catholics and gnostics. Therefore, when a person such as John Piper says he adheres to it, we must take note and mark him as an heretic, at least on this matter. Gnostics like LD because it is supposed to lead to "*special spiritual insights*"... secret knowledge.

The 'Emerging Church' is quickly assuming the technique as part of its teaching and practice, and charismatics are being encouraged to use it by people like Piper. We should expect this, as charismaticism is itself a false religion.

Significantly, LD is also adapted by people of other religious scriptures – the Torah, Koran, and Bhagavad Gita, to name three. This should not just ring an alarm bell – it ought to thunder out a peal of multiple bells! Even secularists use the method, without the religious connotations. An example is the godless Jungian method of thought (sensing, thinking, intuiting, and feeling).

LD, without doubt, is just another satanic ploy used to lead people away from truth and genuine prayer. Charismatics are automatically prone to its charms, because they love what is novel and suggestive of secret power and knowledge. LD adherents go on to seek special secret information from God by following their steps to mystical union, thus opening themselves up to further satanic infiltration based on bypassing biblical truth as expressed already by God in an open manner.

True prayer is very frank. It is given by God to the individual, but never bypasses or gives knowledge that differs from already extant scripture. Jesus says all we need to do is to ask God to teach us how to pray – not Roman monks or mystical theories!

### References

- 1 Christian Spirituality: themes from the tradition; by Lawrence S. Cunningham, Keith J. Egan; 1996; ISBN 0-8091-3660-0; page 38
  
- 2 Dei Verbum (the Vatican's English translation of 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – Dei Verbum') was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965, following bishop-approval, by a vote of 2,344 to 6.23. It is one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council. The phrase "Dei Verbum" is Latin for "Word of God" and is taken from the first line of the document, as is customary for titles of major Catholic documents.
  
- 3 In a letter to Gregory of Neocaesarea, Origen wrote: "when you devote yourself to the divine reading ... seek the meaning of divine words which is hidden from most people". ('Reading to live: the evolving practice of Lectio divina', by Raymond Studzinski 2010 ISBN 0879072318 pages 26-35).
  
- 4 Carmelite Constitutions (No. 82).
  
- 5 <http://ocarm.org/en/content/ocarm/charism>
  
- 6 <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>

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## Lectio Divina

Written by K B Napier

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